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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A self-destructing document or e-mail messaging system is provided that automatically destroys documents or e-mail messages at a predetermined time by attaching a "virus" to the document or e-mail message. A virus in the form of a Trojan horse is attached to file (such as an e-mail message or document) when it is created. The virus contains a portion of executable code or an executable program which instructs the computer to overwrite and/or delete the file to which the virus is attached at a desired time. Since the virus is attached to the file, it will travel with the file even when the file is copied, forwarded, or saved to disks or tape drives.